

Bennett's agents about the possibility of having me attend his concert in Deer Valley. The agent didn't know Terry or me. He was kind of bored with the whole thing, Terry told him, "Just read Tony's book, if you don't believe me. She's in there three times," etc.

Finally the agent said, "Well, I'll call you back." Tony Bennett quickly responded. "Give her the tickets. Get her there."

It was exciting: What a terrible blow it was to the Terry who brought the tickets over to me, after he'd done all this, and then I said I couldn't go.

That's not the end of the story: Two weeks later, I got a telephone call from a friend up in Oregon who'd been to see Tony Bennett's concert in Seattle. She was a daughter of our band leader, Lin Arison. He's dead now, but his daughter lives in Hood River, Oregon. She went to see Tony Bennett, and was very excited about it. So she called to tell me.

I told her, "I wanted so bad to go, but I couldn't."

She said, "I know."

I asked her, "How'd you know?"

"Tony told me."

Tony still remembers his friends. My sister-in-law got my name for Christmas one year, the year I had a mastectomy, 1997. I was home from the hospital. She didn't know what to get me, but she knew I loved books. She went into a bookstore and saw Tony's picture on a book cover. She looked in the back, and there in the index was my name, right above Danny Thomas's name. Whoever thought I'd be

included in something like that? Danny Thomas got in the book once, and I got in three times. [They look at the book.]

When I came back from Europe I still didn't know quite what to do with myself. The Lord hadn't told me yet. I thought, *Well, I'll go back to California. Maybe there's something I could do there.* Then I got a call to go on a mission.

After my mission to Wales, when I was on the way through Las Vegas, there, glit-tering on marquee of the Flamingo Hotel, were the words: "Ike Carpenter's Band." I told myself, *I've got to say hello to him.*

So I went in and sent a note back to him. Out he came: "Janie, where've been? In Wales, digging coal?"

Of course he knew where I'd been, because I'd tried to teach him a little bit about the gospel before I left. He said, "Janie, I will listen to the Tabernacle Choir, but that's it."

Then the most astounding thing happened. Ike invited me to come back and sing with his band again.

I was flabbergasted. This was Las Vegas. He already had a girl singer. But he said, "I'm finished with this date here this weekend, and I'll be in California next weekend. Let's get together and work this all out."

I said, "Great, we'll do that."

I was so happy, to know what I was going to do. I was excited. I really enjoyed singing with bands. It's fun.

We arrived in Los Angeles quite late that night. I was taking a step across the

threshold into the front room when the telephone rang. It was President Ernest L. Wilkinson, asking me to come to BYU and take over what was called the Student Program Bureau.

My heart sank. I didn't want to come back to BYU. I loved BYU, but I never did want to come back. BYU was over with. I never had big dreams about that, but I was sure dreaming big about going back with the band. I was excited about that.

Oh, I'll never forget the sinking feeling I felt. But anything to do with BYU or the Church is like a matter of life and death to me. You just don't turn either one down. So I told him, "All right."

The very next day, I got a ride back to Provo with somebody else. I cried the whole way—every inch of the way. I just drenched that car. I didn't want to come back. But I did anyway. I knew it would be important, but I didn't know then how important. That was how I came back to BYU in the fall of 1952.

President Wilkinson had talked Cleon Skousen into coming to BYU to head up a public relations bureau, or University Relations, or whatever it was called. He'd known Skousen back in Washington DC. Skousen had been the right-hand man to J. Edgar Hoover in the FBI for sixteen years. But he was a man of all trades, a great author of many outstanding books.

Brother Skousen decided that he'd better check out the "Student Program Bureau." The way it got started was that people in the valley, or anyplace where there are a lot of young people, knew there was bound to be a lot of talent at BYU. So they would flood BYU with requests for programs,

whether one solo, or a fifteen-minute program, or a half-hour program, or whatever they could get out of BYU.

Nobody at BYU had paid attention to these requests—not the drama department, not the music department, not the dance department. Maybe they didn't know about the request, I don't know. So the student body officers decided it would be a good service project for the students. Something had to be done about all these requests.

The students had organized and had a chairman. They auditioned the kids. By now, a program bureau had been going for several years. Brother Skousen decided to go out on one of the programs and see what the students were doing. Brother Skousen liked what he saw, so he went to Wilkinson and said, "This could be an effective arm of public relations, but it would need a full-time director, not just a student chairman every year." The students didn't learn from what had happened the year before. President Wilkinson got excited about the idea and said, "Do it."

The idea was to build up BYU, because it had become such a girls' school. The only thing we had budget for was transportation to go to every high school in the State of Utah during the year. I had that big responsibility. We had great talent in the '50s. That's when the Engemanns were here, and Jim Pike, of the Lettermen—outstanding talent. The kids now kind of get a complex about how great the shows are now, because they think of them in terms of themselves. But we were as talented then as they are now. Look at the training the kids get now—the best from the music department, the best from the drama, the best from the dance, and the best from the technical end of things—all

that. I used to say, "All we had was me." But we didn't do too badly.

We had two real strong people behind us: one was President Wilkinson, and the other was the Lord. That's a pretty good team, and we did a lot of good. I have a lot of good stories.

In the first four years, we did 2,463 shows. That was anything from a solo, to ten minutes, to fifteen minutes, to half an hour, to an hour and a half. I worked my head off. It took me a while to get the kids to believe me. I remember a beautiful blonde dancer I asked to dance on a show we were taking out on a Friday night. I was only given one instruction: "If you get two-weeks' notice, take it." We didn't have any sound or light system, just ourselves and our confidence, and our own personnel. That's why I told my kids, "You've got to look good in a gunnysack. You've got to put yourselves across."

I was also told by the Lord the way to do it, and that was to do it with His help. This didn't mean they didn't work as hard in school, but if they could put that spirit across to audiences, they'd be all right.

That's what happened in the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. We were there with a Christmas show, a good show. A man there, president of the building, announced himself and said, "I've been the president of this building for twelve years, and I want you to know that this is the best show that's been in here in twelve years."

I didn't believe a word he said, because over on the side were posters of Liberace, Fred Waring, and other real professionals, very popular people. But we knew how good it was to be there and hear the reaction of the audience.

This was a few years after our initial visits to Utah high schools. We had started small but then started to break out.

I loved all the kids, they were so bright-eyed and talented and so spiritual and so willing. And they worked so hard. I had six o'clock morning rehearsals every day of the world—which I will never do again. We had to work to do it, but the kids were having fun. We did fun things.

Doctor Halliday came to me and asked, "Are you going to do a chorus?"

I know he didn't like what I said, but I said to him, "No, that's your job. We won't do a chorus."

Then the drama department didn't want us to do Broadway shows, but they didn't say we couldn't do excerpts from them. I stuck to variety shows—that's all we did. I didn't want to ruffle the feathers of other departments any more than I had to. I suspect that if the music, drama and dance departments had answered those first requests for talent from BYU, the Program Bureau would never have been formed. We stood for something while it was our turn. Look at it all now—it's amazing.

I was called to a meeting with the MIA General Board in 1954. I didn't think a thing about it, except, *Oh, they probably want me to put on a show to help the MIA.* That's the idea I went with. When the board talked to me, and said, "I guess you know what you're here for," I said, "Not, not really."

They said, "The Lord wants you to be on the MIA General Board."

That's how I was called to the General Board, which I was on for sixteen years—

a long time in comparison to how long board members serve now.

There were committees then, and my first committee was the Beehive Committee; the second committee was the MIA⁸ Committee; and the third committee was the Golden Gleaner committee; finally I was put on the dance committee. I thought I'd never live long enough to be on something I knew anything about, like the music committee. Crawford Gates was on that committee, along with others.

I was on the dance committee the longest. I'm not a dancer, either, though I could have been. I have good rhythm and good feel for dance. I ended up writing the big openers, closers and in between things for the dance festival. It was a wonderful experience, and I was glad I was able to do that.

When I was first called, Bertha Reeder was the general president, and then she was released (and of course we were all released with her). Florence Jacobson was called to be the next general president, and she called me right back to the board. So I was on the board from 1954 to 1970. For a long time, I was doing something like two full-time jobs. I didn't get much sleep—but I was big and strong, so I kept going.

When I was hired full-time to the Program Bureau, there were many changes. It wasn't called Student Program Bureau very long, and how long it had lasted before I came on, I don't know, but it wasn't long, maybe ten years.

When I came, the "student" part was taken off, and it was called the Program Bureau from then on. Again, President Wilkinson's desire was to entice good

students to come to BYU. That was our main objective. I thought that was all right, but *my* big thing to stress was to open doors for the missionaries. I thought we should do that too. Wilkinson thought that was okay too. So it was a missionary tool as well as a recruiting tool, and those objectives haven't changed.

We had wonderful experiences from the very beginning. It was very, very obvious that the Lord was behind us. I felt like I had His finger in my back the whole time. I wanted to do it the way the Church did things. I learned my first thing with the Delta Phi Chorus tour. As I said, I came in the fall of 1952. Quite a few things were going on with students, but they were on their own, so they weren't too organized. There were faculty advisors, so they had a connection with the faculty and the university. But the groups weren't working closely together.

The ROTC Chorus was run on its own, with a student direction; and they were very good. I think that's one of the reasons why John Halliday didn't want me to do chorus, because there were already plenty of choruses.

There were various club organizations: the Latino Club, the Kia Ora Club—foreign kids who liked to perform, and people liked to have them.

In August 1952, Delta Phi Chorus booked themselves a tour up to the Northwest during the Christmas holidays, after school was out and before New Year's. So Skousen said to me, "You get with them and make a family show out of it and pull them under the Program Bureau." But I sure learned a lot from Delta Phi. It's a good thing the Lord set it up for me to go,

because the main purpose of those boys, all returned missionaries, was to recapture the spirit they had had in the mission field. Well, you couldn't do better than that.

They had one prayer after another, and testimony meetings on the bus. That was before the time when there were microphones on buses, so that wasn't easy to do. Yet they would stop and have a testimony meeting, or they'd go to a church and have testimony meeting. They had devotionals all the time. I learned that that's the way things should be done—the Lord's way. We needed to try to be in tune with the Spirit. One of the big problems with the whole world is that we're always trying to make God like us, when it should be the other way around.

I always had a prayer meeting before every show—and I called these meetings *prayer meetings*. I knew nothing about "green rooms"—and that's the world anyway. I was not that interested in what the world did. I was interested in what the Church did, so we called our meetings prayer meetings. Now it's called the green room, and I'm sure the Lord honors that.

On the buses and everywhere, we just copied the Delta Phi Chorus. And it worked. The kids learned a lot from that.

Who are some of the people who came through your program who became big stars?

Some of our biggest talent came from the 1950s. The Engemann Family—Carl and Bobby were brothers; Carl married Jerrie, and they met on our little tours. Their big tour was to Escalante, and places like that. The Engemann Trio, Carl, Jerrie, and Bobby, were in my opinion even better

than the Lettermen, and we all know how good they were. Their blend was perfect—two brothers and a wife. They were beautiful to look at, beautiful to listen to, and beautiful to be with. They were wonderful. And they still are.

Carl was also a good student, a 4.0-er some of the time. When he graduated, the group moved to California. Jerrie did well there, though they went through the starvation period, which entertainers always have to do. Then when everything started to break for them, Bobby got called on a mission. He didn't think twice—he went on his mission. "Goodbye. If we can do it now, we can do it better then." That left Carl to go out on his own, and he became the vice president of Warner Brothers Studio, and then of Capital Records. He's been very good to the BYU kids: he gave the Three D's a chance, and Sandy and Sally a chance, and other things like that.

Every time we went to California with a show, he would be on the front row—always supportive.

The Three D's had a good career, and they revived themselves a couple of times. There were other minor performers: Heather Young became a pretty good star of television movies (for example, *Land of the Giants* for two and half years). I've given to the department a whole list of these former students.

We started going to California and Seattle and around Utah. Those tours were simple; I was kind of greedy, just wanting to show the kids off to everybody. I thought they were the answers to all the problems in the world—and I still think so. But we had no money or other way to do it. When I did the 2,463 shows, while I was also on the

MIA General Board, I really broke my health down. I was ready for the booby hatch. It took Skousen on one hand and Wilkinson on the other to hold me down one night. I became frantic. I just knew everything was going wrong, so I became hysterical. I almost hauled off and socked President Wilkinson in the nose. When that almost happened, I knew that something had to be done. They calmed me down by administering to me, and we went on.

When I decided to go to New York City with one of the girls, one of the General Board members, Carolyn Dunn (Loren Dunn's sister) looked at me one day and said, "Let's go to New York."

I said, "Let's!" Just like that.

We just took off, and President Wilkinson didn't say anything about it. Sister Reeder kept me on the board all the time, even though I was back there. I had a great time in New York, and I hated to come back to BYU. But President Wilkinson called me back, and again, my conscience wouldn't let me do otherwise. I came back, but little did I know. I thought, "I'm going to go back and bury myself in Provo." That was in the fall of 1959, after I got home from my mission.

Then 1960, I got to thinking, "We need to go overseas. We need to go everywhere with these kids. People need to see these kinds of kids. People don't know they exist." We knew that the government sent tours overseas, and it paid all the bills. So we started to write to the government. Brother Lawrence did most of the writing, though once in a while I did. I thought, "Nobody's going to look at that, it's so business-like." So I would follow up with

a cute card that would stand out from all the other correspondence. That's what got the State Department on our side.

My brother John helped a lot too. And different other people helped by making trips back east, when they had to go for something else. We found out that the Department of Defense and the State Department both sent out shows, and both paid the bills. The Department of Defense sent out far oftener than the State Department, because of all the American servicemen stationed in various places around the world, and they needed to have their morale built up.

We finally found out that what you had to do was send a tape in, with some pictures, and an outline of what you planned to do. We did that, and lo and behold, here came an invitation. I had a marvelous show to respond with. A fellow, Jim Rawls, blind from when he was born, was on my show. He was a genius, a show-stopper, because he could play the piano like crazy. He could also play the drums just enough to get us by. We couldn't take enough people to make a band, and a director like me wasn't encouraged to come, unless we were part of the show. The money was a limitation, although we did get to take Jimmy Lawrence on a couple of tours as a spotlight man.

I had a remarkable bunch of talent, for example, Ina Lou, a twenty-six-year-old, married woman who taught in the music department. Sam Francis was a real headliner, because he was a voice mimic. He could mimic all the current stars, so he just wowed audiences, wherever we went.

I took my brothers John and Bob, and I was ready to fight anybody who was going

to say one word about it. I used to get those guys out of sickbed and everything else, to save a show if somebody fell through. I wasn't in this thing to fail. I'd go to the real pros, no matter how sick they were, and they would help me. Even Carolyn would help me, though she was married and by then had a baby. So my family has been a great blessing to me, but they're all BYU. They're all *sold* on BYU. They *love* BYU for the spiritual things at BYU. Our tour was a big success.

The Department of Defense had two guidelines to follow: (1) If you were a group from anywhere west of the Mississippi River, you went to the Orient; if you were east of the river, you got to go to Europe. That was how the groups were divided, because it was cheaper for sponsors that way. (2) Don't go more often than once every other year. The department didn't want to say that congressmen were favoring people.

The Department of Defense really liked our show. It was a wonderful experience, and I was really proud of my group—putting up with the heat and the humidity. The sweat running of John reminded me of Joseph Smith saying you couldn't stop the flow of the Missouri River, because it was so strong. You couldn't stop John from perspiring, or the others either. There were puddles all over.

We got great fan letters, even from generals, given the results they saw. They recognized a difference in the fellows who saw our show. We heard it ourselves: "We don't feel like going down to the village tonight." That's where the prostitutes would hang out, and other things like that.

Etta (who later married my brother) was a young married woman whose husband had been killed. They'd been converts to the Church in Washington state. She thought her life was over when her husband died; their baby son was only ten days old, and their little girl two.

Her bishop said, "No, your life isn't over. Go to BYU."

She had heard about the Program Bureau, and she liked to perform. Her talent was dramatic, spiritual reading; she came in and read the 23rd and 24th Psalms for me, and it was beautiful. I was touched by her performance, but "What can I do with that in a red-hot variety show?" Yet I couldn't get her performance out of my mind.

When the invitation came to go to the Orient, the thought came to me that I should talk her. I talked to John, who said, "No, you don't need anything like that on the show!" (Then he ended up marrying her.)

It used to be called "Panorama." I put on a lot of skits on the first part of the show we were going to take. We had lots of "big stuff"—lots of little kids. But individual singers were the best. They came back for that show.

My two favorite audiences in the world were high school kids and servicemen. Both groups are very honest—they'd just as soon boo you as cheer for you. You've got to be good. So I took this woman around to a couple of high schools. Those kids listened! You had to program it just right. She worked hard backstage, so that she came out with the right "aura" around her, as I call it. She was a beautiful blonde

anyway, so people weren't going to look away, especially not GIs. It was a surprise to them when the other stuff came out, but they would sit and listen to it. And that's what the high schools kids did.

That gave me courage to ask her if she'd like to do her readings in our show, but she was scared to death, because she had the two kids and didn't know what to do with them. She'd never gone off and left them before, and the tour was going to be six weeks long. So I took her on a mid-semester tour to the San Francisco Bay area in March. We were to leave for the Orient in July. I paid for her babysitter (we didn't have money for a babysitter, so I paid for one—the Program Bureau had no funds for anything extra).

When we went to say goodbye to the kids, it was the first time they'd ever seen television. When their mother said goodbye, they didn't even want to stop and say goodbye to her. But we had a couple to take care of the kids, so there was no problem. Because of that, Etta decided she could go with us to the Orient. The kids stayed with their grandpa and grandma in Washington.

I'm giving this background because of something weird that happened to Etta on the trip. Etta was always very calm—she had to be. After her husband was killed, her little girl broke out with impetigo all over her body. Etta had to hold her for a year, and it wasn't easy for a single mother to have to take care of these kind of things. But Etta just kept her cool and her faith, and her little girl got better. So it took something for Satan to get through to Etta. And the only way he could do it was through her kids.

He put the idea into her head that something was wrong with her kids, and she started to sob. When you're home, there are big enough problems, but when you're three thousand miles away . . . Etta became frantic. John tried to counsel and console her—"No, I don't think anything's wrong, Etta. I don't feel like anything is wrong. The children are all right."

So she'd calm down, but then one of the other girls, Ina Lou (from the Department of Music) passed out on the bus. People go to sleep on the bus, but we couldn't wake this girl up. When we were nearing the place where the show would take place, I had to frantically figure out how to do the show without her. The first thing we thought was we'd have to take her to an emergency room.

She woke up the minute we got to the place where we were going, but she didn't know what had happened to her. She just woke up from being totally passed out. That was weird, and other weird things were happening.

We thought Etta had calmed down. We all came back from a certain show. The men were billeted at a different place than we women were. When Etta was in the shower, one of the other girls came crying to me: "I don't know what to do! Etta's hysterical. She can't stop crying!"

I'd had enough of this, so I said, "I'm going to get Jimmy Lawrence right now" (he was with us on that first tour).

I thought it was just happening to the girls. When it had happened to me, I just went down the hall, because I couldn't go back to sleep, but I could hear someone down the hall. Etta and a girl named Jerrie were

talking. I knocked on the door: "Are you awake? Can I come in?"

"Come in, Janie."

I told them what had happened: "I think Satan is unhappy with what we're doing. He's trying to stop our show." That's what they thought too. "Do you mind joining me in prayer."

We all knelt down and took turns praying. That spirit of worry and our inability to sleep left. Those girls went right to sleep, but I didn't want to go back and be alone in my room. I never went to sleep again on that tour until seven o'clock in the morning, when the first light broke.

We told Jimmy all the things that had been happening. He didn't know what to think of it. "What have you been doing wrong?" he asked us.

I said, "I don't know. We don't think we've been doing anything wrong, we think that the adversary is angry."

Jimmy didn't waste any time: he blessed all of us and cast out anything that might be around.

Etta, still worried about her kids, asked Jimmy if he could give the children a special blessing through her. He said, "No, we really can't do that, but I can give *you* the blessing, and they can be blessed through you."

She was fine from then on. The next she heard from the children, nothing had gone wrong with them.

My father went to Europe that same summer. My sister Dot was in Europe, and we thought we should send my father there

while he was young enough to travel. He'd never been back since the time he was baptized. Dot and I saved our pennies to send my parents, but Mom wouldn't go. She'd been run over by a train when she was twelve years old, and the doctors had planned to amputate both legs, because of the injuries to them. But Grandma's faith just wouldn't let that happen, and the doctors found they didn't have to amputate. Mother still often had many ruptures and sores, though in those days, women wore skirts and dresses down to their feet, so nobody could see her problem. Though she was still in pain, she was never free from a smile or a laugh.

So Dad went to Europe, and I went to the Orient. Mother was in a dither: "Who do I pray for the hardest?" Of course she laughed about that.

Dad came back just before I went through these experiences on the tour. We hadn't left till the middle of July, so we could be back in time for school to start. I've never told Mom or Dad any of these experiences, but Mom did tell me that all of a sudden, Dad sat straight up in bed one night and said, "Janie needs me. Janie has some problems and needs me." That was the night that I had the nightmare.

We got through the rest of the tour safely, though we paid a price.

I paid the price again with the Lamanite Generation, something else I've never talked about. I don't like to bring these incidents up. There again, great work had to be done on that show by the Lamanites, and the show was the beginning.

The university must now be very proud of the Program Bureau.

Because of the rule that we were supposed to go on a tour every other year, we didn't go the next year, though we did tour the United States. The following year, we were invited back to the Orient. After that, the Department of Defense kind of threw away the rulebook; we went to Europe that year, and then back to the Orient, and then to the Arctic Zone, and then to the Caribbean—we just kept going. We once went three times in one year.

I've got a big book of fan letters. Jimmy Lawrence had his secretary save the letters, because the Scheduling Department of the university asked all of us to write a history of what we'd done, from a missionary angle. Those letters came in handy when I wrote that history, because these letters are wonderful examples of all the things I'm talking about. I have the proof of what I've said happened.

I started the Young Ambassadors in 1970. Jimmy Fukasaki was the head of all the shows that came to the Orient, and he *loved* our shows. An American Japanese, Jimmy had moved to Japan so that he could learn his own culture. He had even served in combat the Army in World War II. He'd set up church meetings for us, and sometimes even come to them. We'd go to the branches whenever we could, and if they weren't available, we'd have our own services. Jimmy liked the kids, because he could depend on them; they caused no problems.

In 1970, Japan was having its Expo '70, World's Fair (these fairs aren't held anymore). He said to us, "The best you can do is to get in touch with Mr. Atori, who is the head of the entertainment division of the World's Fair." I'm being immodest again, but he said, "Tell him you have a

Janie Thompson show, and represent all the universities of America through that one show. All the other people are going to ask if they can come, and we're not going to be able to pay their way." He also knew that we couldn't afford to pay our *own* way. "You've got such a good reputation with the Department of Defense, we're going to ask them if they will sponsor you and give you two weeks extra time to be at the opening of the World's Fair."

Our group met at the Salt Lake Airport (many didn't have time to come to Provo). Jimmy Lawrence and Norm Nielson were then on our staff. Then I saw where we'd be, on the back end of a big outside theater—and there was a whole lake right there, and all the people would be across the lake. We were allowed to bring fifteen people, including me. How could we project in that setting?

The Sounds of Freedom were also going on a tour, what was called the USO tour. The USO is an agent for the Department of Defense. So we ended up doing two or three shows for the USO.

The shows were scheduled in a certain way: first to Japan, then to Korea, then back to Japan, then to Okinawa, then to Guam or the Philippines. Sometimes some of the islands would be included, for example Iwo Jima or Wake or Midway. We got to go to all of them. Finally we came to Hawaii, and then came home.

I said to Jimmy, "Look, they've got fifteen in their group. We've got fifteen in our group. We need to get the two groups together somehow." The Sounds of Freedom left in February, so by the time they'd gone through their routine and we'd come, they'd be in the Philippines.

We came right in time for the Expo '70. So their tour was reversed: they started in the Philippines and ended up in Japan, so the groups could get together.

It had been six weeks since we had^a rehearsed together, so we had to have a rehearsal. The Japanese couldn't understand why we had to have one, but we couldn't tell them what we needed, because of the financial situation and the fact that we needed to bring more into the group. What helped out was the fact that after the fair closed at ten o'clock, we could start our rehearsals at 10:30.

We had trouble getting good sound, so we could project across the water. We were told, "We're going to have to record everything." That gave us a chance to rehearse and record our entire program. Then perfect sound went out. I think the Lord had his hand in a lot of these things.

This was the Young Ambassadors. I started the Lamanite Generation the very next year. Dale Tingey called me from the Southwest Indian Mission. The mission had put together what they then called the *Lamanite Generation*. It was time for all the missionaries to be released; the high school kids in the show were graduating and coming to BYU. Brother Tingey himself was going to be released as the mission president in a year's time. So he called me and asked, "Could you keep this show going? Could you take it over and make it a success?"

It was weird the way he said everything, and I was busy trying to get the Young Ambassadors ready for their tour to Europe. Brother Tingey called me at two o'clock on Thanksgiving Day, just as we were sitting down for dinner. I thought,

"How in the world does President McKay ever run the Church, because he'd never called me?" President Tingey went on: "Well, we've got this show, and I hope it's all right with you." He never really said what he wanted to say. By putting two and two together, I finally realized that he was asking me to keep the show going.

I couldn't give him an answer, because he wanted a tour back to his mission in March, a mid-semester tour; and then he wanted another tour for four weeks in the summer. I was asked to do a very smart thing: Would I audition the kids when they arrived at BYU? I'd been trying to put Indians into programs since Paul Felt's day, in the 1960s. Now here it was the '70, and I'd only been able to put one or two on a show as a special feature.

When I walked in and saw all those very cute people—my heart was touched and went out to them. Margie Dobson was so good as a dancer, I put her in the Young Ambassadors right away to go to Europe with me. The Lord worked through her to get me to do the other program while in town. She had to have a tracheotomy to save her life, so she could breathe. And then she wanted to come home. I told her, "Margie, if you'll stick it out that long, I'll do the Lamanite Generation show." She said she had to get home to help get their show ready. I'd already done the March program, with eleven Lamanites, and I had to add six palefaces with it to make it enough of a show to work.

We were progressing, and we had more Lamanites than palefaces.

We had only three weeks between coming home from Europe with the Young Ambassadors' show and the show for the

Lamanites. Tingey thought we didn't have to practice or anything—you just did it. I said to him, "Look, if you don't get those kids here for me for at least a week, we're not going to have any kind of a show."

When they found out I'd do a show, they got some more talent, a lot of them high school kids.

BYU gave us permission for all this; I didn't do a thing without the university's permission. We called these "experimental tours."

We finally got the kids together for one week, and the high school kids didn't know me at all. They'd never worked so hard in their lives. I thought they'd silently steal away, run off, but they stuck it out. As I say, from the very beginning, the Lord's finger was in all of these shows—and it's still there.

I rode in the back of a truck all the way from Provo, Utah to Flagstaff, Arizona, and we did a show that night. And it wasn't a bad show. When you had just one week, and the kids hadn't done the kind of show that I liked to put on, they had no idea of pacing and all that kind of thing. They all did have their own costumes, and they were *very* good, and *very* cute. Some of the other girls, like Vicky Bird, a full-blooded Indian, a sophomore by then, had been in the Cougarettes and the Folk Dancers. She brought good talent right in to the Lamanite Generation. And other good talent came in.

I don't know how many tours we did—they are all a jumble in my mind. We did three a year for all those years.

I retired in 1984, and I've still been doing what I can do. My last show was for the

Fourth of July Freedom Festival in the year 2008, the "We the People" show, all original—all the music. I wrote every note, except one song, which John Holliman wrote. I was asked to do this show twenty-one years ago, in 1987, the two hundred-year birthday of the signing of the Constitution. L. Tom Perry called and said, "We really want to do something special. Could you write a thirty-minute show about the Constitution?"

I thought some songs had already been written about the Constitution, but there weren't any—you cannot find any. There are none. I watched every big show on the networks, because the whole country was celebrating all year. All these shows used "American the Beautiful," "God Bless America," and so forth, the songs dear to us, but none about the Constitution. I did a lot of research and wrote all the songs.

The first song was called, "We the People." It has the most beautiful lyrics you've ever heard in your life: "We the people agree the people who will guarantee true liberty. We the people—" And the music was also very good. I'm not taking credit for anything; the Lord blessed me.

You have mentioned how in many ways, at many times, how the Lord has blessed you throughout your life. That's evident in many ways. Would you share with us your testimony?

It's all true. I look at our problems today—I was telling the Lord this morning, our problems are not unlike those of the Nephites and the Lamanites at the end of the Book of Mormon. There's all the wickedness going on right now. We don't hear in any of the campaigns the one word that would settle it all: repent. Of

course the politicians would be laughed at if they said something like that. Things are pretty serious.

We have the real truth with us, so we have no excuse not to share it with as many people as we can. It started with the Joseph Smith, and the end of the Book of Mormon ties right in—Moroni and so forth. We can read all about it. We can study that and find out what happens to people who live in this land. This is a land “choice above all lands,” something the Lord has said very plainly. He’s also said that this land would never be in bondage *as long as we serve the God of this land, who is his Son, our Savior.*

A lot of people in our own country don’t know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. I worry about the people in Iraq and Afghanistan. I see those wars as another great missionary tool, as opening up ways for those people to learn, for themselves, things they never knew, if they can just have freedom of religion and get democracy going. Our armed services are trying their best to help them to this end.

We’re all Heavenly Father’s children, but these peoples have been left out for centuries. We in America haven’t been left out. We have known that this country was built on religious freedom and on people who were seeking religious freedom, as well as thinking to do what was right. Our Founding Fathers all were righteous and good men.

So it’s our own fault if we fall away. It’s another example of prosperity rearing its ugly head, as it did among the Nephites. Every time they were blessed, they would start to become full of pride, and then

they’d go off the beam again. That’s what we’re doing. But we’ve got BYU. We’ve got the missionary system. We’ve got the wonderful programs and shows. They’re inspiring. And they are all based on truth. Even Bronco Mendenhall has got the football team striving to do things in the right way—striving to excel, trying to get his players to become the best football players they can be, for the right reasons. So he’s on board too.

All these people, along with the full-time missionaries, are a great army. I guess the best thing I can say is that the promise has been made that if we will follow the Savior, if we will hold to Him in every way, the gospel will stay here. That promise has been made, and we’ve got to see that it will happen. We’ve got a big job, and all of us have to put our shoulders to the wheel and put our talents to work.

We can only do that with His help, so we have to be true to the faith ourselves. It’s his work, and our privilege to help.

I say all this in the Lord’s name, our Savior’s name, Amen.